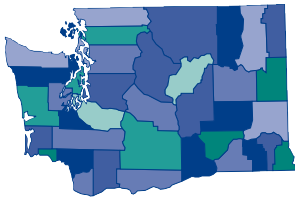


# Building Projects that Build Communities

Recommended Best Practices

Developed by the  
Community Partnership Forum

First Edition  
2003



Community Partnership Forum



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**





**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

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January 27, 2003

Dear Reader:

WSDOT is pleased to send you *Building Projects That Build Communities*, a new handbook to help everyone work together on transportation projects that meet our citizen's needs.

*Building Projects* results from an unusual and exciting Community Partnership Forum that has worked to consider the best ways to plan and develop projects where different levels of government must solve intricate and inter-related problems in order for a project to succeed.

The Community Partnership Forum has brought an array of transportation experts from different backgrounds together to share insights with one another and incorporate them into this valuable new handbook.

The people who contributed to the Community Partnership Forum gave freely not only of time and energy, but of personal expertise and that of their organizations—cities, counties, consulting firms, Sound Transit, the Association of Washington Cities, the Federal Highway Administration and our own Washington State Transportation Department. We want to thank all the Forum participants, offer congratulations on the quality of the product, and acknowledge the contributions made by our contractors Norton-Arnold & Company, David Evans and the Cascade Design Collaborative.

We hope you find that *Building Projects* contributes to future successes in developing good transportation projects in our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Paula Hammond'.

Paula Hammond  
Chief of Staff

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Doug MacDonald'.

Douglas B. MacDonald  
Secretary of Transportation

## The Community Partnership Forum, 2002



photo Grace Eubanks

Forum members from left to right: Jim Seitz, Association of Washington Cities; Julie Mercer Matlick, WSDOT Team Leader; Tracy Krawczyk, Sound Transit; Mike Horton, WSDOT; Paul Krauss, City of Auburn; Bart Gernhart, WSDOT; Crystal Donner, Perteet Engineering; Dan Mathis, Federal Highway Administration; Margaret Norton Arnold, Norton Arnold & Company; John Milton, WSDOT; Claudia Hirschey, David Evans & Associates; and Mark Leth, WSDOT.

Not pictured: Tom Ballard, Pierce County; Tim Bevan, CH2M Hill; Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, City of Stevenson; Phil Fordyce, WSDOT; Mike Frucci, WSDOT; Mary Legry, WSDOT; Renee Montgelas, WSDOT; Brent Rasmussen, former WSDOT; and Randy Witt, Bainbridge Island.



photo Rita Robinson, DCTED

◀ Downtown Walla Walla

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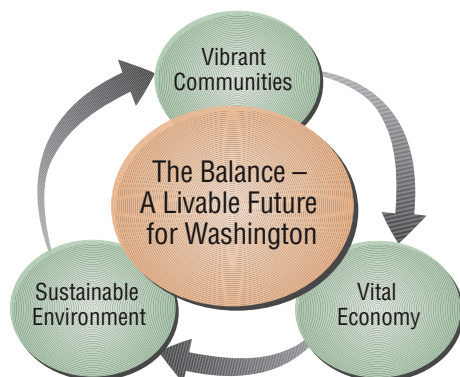


# Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is guided by a statewide vision for transportation. This 50-year vision was developed by the Washington State Transportation Commission with its transportation partners across the state. It calls for changing the way we approach transportation to ensure that Washington remains a desirable place to live in the future. That's a contrast from current trends that project growing congestion problems and deteriorating transportation systems that will ultimately have a negative impact on the quality of life in our state and livability of our communities.

Supporting “Vibrant Communities” is one of the Commission’s primary goals in how WSDOT delivers its transportation projects. “Livability” is a concept of a future that is enduring, economically vibrant, responsible (civil), and offers a desirable quality of life. Since a livable future is a goal for transportation planning and investment decisions, the Commission’s vision lists Livability as the central theme for its vision. *Figure 1* below suggests that striving for a balance of vibrant communities, a vital economy, and a sustainable environment we will enjoy a livable future. The commission envisioned a livable future through effective community-based design and collaborative decision-making. First, we must change current trends and chart a new course for the future. Through development of tools such as this *Best*

*Figure 1. Commission Vision for a Livable Future*



**“The only way we are going to meet the transportation needs of our state is to be willing to change how we do business and to keep building and extending our partnerships.”**

—Transportation Commissioner Connie Niva

*Practices Guidebook* new and innovative ways of doing business will help us begin that process.

**The outcomes sought by the Commission to support livable communities that this document addresses are:**

- Effective community-based design, and
- Collaborative decision-making.

**The Commission directs WSDOT to develop transportation projects in rural and urban areas by working with its partners to:**

- Foster multi-modal transportation systems that enhance communities,
- Develop collaborative transportation actions sensitive to community values, and
- Coordinate access to funding.

Real partnerships start with ongoing relationships of trust and collaboration. The concept of true community partnerships is good in theory, but can be difficult to put into practice because of things such as local land use decisions which can enhance or negatively impact the transportation system because it requires tremendous teamwork between agencies and organizations. Community partnership projects require full participation and consensus by all partners working on joint projects. At times the interests, values, and priorities of various agencies may be in conflict with each other.



Examples are numerous particularly when a state highway essentially serves as the “Main Street” for a community. The state, in this situation, may be most concerned about maintaining mobility, traffic speeds, and safety on that stretch of the highway. The local community, in contrast, may be more interested in slower speeds, traffic calming devices, pedestrian access, and aesthetic enhancements to the downtown that will contribute to more community character and the local economy.

Other projects can be less complex but just as important to the community. The design, aesthetics, and surface street links to an HOV Direct Access freeway interchange, for example, may be key priorities to a neighborhood that is striving to maintain its sense of place and overall quality of life for its residents.

Even a railroad overpass or at-grade crossings can have substantial impacts on a community depending on where it is located and how it intersects with other roads in a given neighborhood.

All projects with any possible impacts to the local community require a balanced and sensitive approach to planning, design, and construction. The WSDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), tribes, local agencies and/or other partners need to understand and implement collaborative approaches that allow all stakeholders to participate equally in the vision, design, and construction of the project. At the same time, joint projects need to be implemented in a way that enables those stakeholders to achieve multiple project goals.

The key is to strive for balance. Projects must be supported by sound engineering practices and, at the same time, incorporate the needs of the jurisdictions involved. This *Guidebook* is intended to assist project teams in achieving that balance.

You are encouraged to use this *Guidebook* as a framework to help you—whether you are a local agency, staff at WSDOT, or representing another interest—to carry out your joint projects more effectively. Project teams are encouraged to use the tools described in this document to help them set the stage for long-term success and to implement the planning, design, and construction of projects.

This *Guidebook*, however, is just a starting point. Real change in the way community partnership projects are developed and managed will require strong commitment and action from all individuals involved, whether they be WSDOT, FHWA staff, elected officials, citizens, tribal members, or consultants.

Long delays or skyrocketing costs are discouraging to everyone. Both WSDOT and local agencies are committed to fostering change in the way joint projects are conducted throughout Washington State. You are encouraged to use this *Guidebook* to help retain or even improve our quality of life.



▲ Port Townsend Historic Downtown.

photo Rita Robinson, DCTED